549 available to me, the government recognizes the presence of 702 free women out of a population of 8,386 persons who are not permanent residents.

Article IV. Premarital Sexuality

896 Under this heading we will examine:

1. What the Nkundó think about virginity.
2. Relations between single people.
3. The Nkundó's attitude toward births outside of wedlock.

1. Virginity

The word "virginity" has a double meaning. It may signify the presence of the hymen, the wholeness of the body, or it may have the meaning given in the dictionary: "virgin, a girl who has never had intercourse with a man."

Because of the practice described in Article II, 1, Nkundó girls who remain physically virgin until adulthood are extremely rare. Even if a girl does not begin sexual life until after her body has reached maturity -- a situation which occurs rarely today but which was formerly common, (2) [78] she will not give herself up to carnal

2. See no. 2 of the present article.

pleasures until after she has broken her hymen.

585 836 What is the Nkundó attitude toward virginity? This question must be divided into two parts:

1) Does the future husband attach any importance to the physical virginity of his fiancée? Evidently not from what we have seen.

2) Does he attach any importance to her moral virginity? That is, is it a matter of indifference to him whether or not he is the first to have intercourse with her?

585 836 To say that it makes absolutely no difference to him might be too extreme a statement. But it is certainly not very important to him, since the primary purpose of his marriage is to obtain progeny and to follow his natural instinct in an honest fashion. This does not mean that he likes to marry a woman of loose morals; quite the contrary.

171 585 836 What is the linguistic data on the subject of virginity? In an interesting paper entitled "The Principles of Bantu Marriage" (Africa Vol. 2, No. 3 (1929), p. 255), E. Torday says, "Some of the most competent philologists assure us that in most Bantu languages there is no word for 'virgin'; . . . . The Wachagga, who may be an exception, use the word 'unimpaired,' and it is perhaps in the use of similar expressions, not exclusively applied to physical virginity, that we shall find the explanation of the absence of a specific term."

585 836 192 Thus the Lonkundó have a noun: ekátɛ́. It is derived from the root kát (the verb is -kátema), which means "to be firmly attached, to be tenacious" (e.g., lokátɛ́, "tenacity"). Ekátɛ́ designates something which is difficult to open, to separate, to break up, especially fruit with a tough, hard, thick rind. It is applied to the litɔ́fɛ́, lisɛ́njá, and the lindongó when it is impossible to break the shell which contains the edible portion even though the fruit is ripe. [79] This term is used in a figurative sense for a woman who resists seduction, who "does not allow herself to be opened." It is not at all specific and in no way the equivalent of our word "virginity," rather it seems to signify "chastity."

Other Nkundó tribes seem to have a specific word, bokotó. I learned this term from natives living between the Ikelemba and the Tshuapa, both east and west of the Julɛ́, as well as from some Basɛ́ká Bongwalanga from the old Lulonga District. The missionaries of the Apostolic Prefecture of Basankusu use it in their publications to mean "virginity, virgin." I was not able to get an exact idea of its precise meaning, but as far as I was able to make out it is much closer to "virgin chastity" than ekátɛ́. In any case it includes no reference to physical virginity. (1)

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1. We should not be astonished that "primitive" tribes have no word in their language

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which specifically expresses our idea of virginity, nor deduce from its absence that the thing itself is unknown to them. The Greeks and Romans were well acquainted with it, yet they had no precise word for it. Parthenos and Virgo mean simply "unmarried girl." The Germanic words such as Maagd and Jungfrau, which now signify "virgin," originally had the same meaning as the Greek and Latin terms.

585 836 The foregoing does not imply that every Nkundó girl is free to have sexual relations and that public opinion approves of libertinism among single people. We will examine this question in the following paragraphs.

896 164 2. Sexual relations between single people

In dealing with this question we must distinguish between relations between adults and the contacts between nonadults. We will therefore examine the two situations separately so that at the end we can attempt to explain the changes in native attitudes in this realm that have occurred. [80]

A. Before physical maturity. We will first relate what the natives tell about customary practices in the past, and then describe the practices of the present day.

In the past, sexual contacts between young people not yet marriageable were severely punished by their parents. The children were taught that those who were guilty would be struck down by a very serious illness which was inevitably fatal. This illness was called by the generic term ndota (1), and the more specific one, esémbéji.

1. Ndota is the name of the illness which is the punishment for an infraction of a sexual

562 exclusive rights over her. Hence the proverb: Mbĭmbo ĭle nd'ân ôimbo
836 ĭa la nkɔ̂lɔ́, "boimbo fruit found under the tree have no owner; they
[539] belong to the first person who gathers them." Thus a girl for whom nothing has been paid belongs to no one. A woman free in this manner does not infringe on the rights of any man in her sexual relations. There are therefore no sanctions against her licentiousness.

836 Furthermore, the discovery of her activities gives rise to no
864 shame. At most more serious parents will rebuke children who go too far -- the girls because they abuse the body and reduce their value for a prospective marriage (2), the boys because they [83] run the risk

● [585]

2. Not that a smaller bride price would be given for them. But a serious man would rather not take a woman for wife who has "run around" a great deal and therefore is more likely to commit adultery, to be unfaithful, and less likely to become the mother of a numerous progeny.

of financial difficulties (the dangers of adultery, indemnity for childbirth with death as a result, etc.).

626 Public opinion is even more lenient than the parents. This
836 attitude is easy to understand: strangers need fear no unpleasant consequences. Errors of this sort are generally considered natural weaknesses, provided that they do not occur too frequently. For public opinion is hard on people who run from one to another; they are stigmatized with the name ebâbɔ́ɔ́, "unfaithful, flighty, without intelligence or reasoning powers," or ebɔ̂ngɔ́, a stronger term with the same meaning.

836 From all the foregoing should we deduce that every woman is free to indulge fully in fornication? On the basis of the above considerations we could frankly conclude the affirmative. The behavior that can be observed from day to day fully confirms this answer. Some people stray more or less accidentally, but for others the practice quickly becomes a habit. And it can be said of all of them that

583x In the second register only three out of sixty-eight cases show a payment of over 100 bakonga (no. 24: 131; no. 44: 130; no. 66: 120); there is one Wăngatɛ́-Ntɔ́mbɛ́ case of a payment of 202 (no. 12). The latter like the Bombomba have raised the amount of the bride price above 200; they imitate the Ekonda, who have really misused the freedom brought by the white men (see Article XI, 3).

5. Paying the walo

589x On the day agreed upon, the young man, his father, and the
585 ndongɛ́ go to the home of the fiancée's parents. Other close relatives make sure to attend this remarkable event if they are not detained elsewhere. After the usual greetings but before any other step is taken, the woman's family offers the ndonga a dish of bananas and some animal food (often botɔ́mba, hen, or bokɔ́sa fish). Then they give the husband various foods: meat or smoked fish (a basketful, for instance), several bunches of bananas, and then, through the medium of the ndonga, a dog, a goat, and some hens which must be included in the nkomɛ́ (see Article VII).

Then they inquire for news, that is, they begin to explain and discuss the matter of the bride price. If the woman's family is not satisfied, the discussion is prolonged, and the young man adds the supplement required(usually such a possibility is foreseen in advance and some extra valuables are left with a relative or associate). Sometimes certain rings or knives are not considered suitable; then two may be counted as one, for example, or the objects that have been refused are replaced with others of better quality.

The ndonga places the valuables in front of the group of the woman's relatives.

It is not indispensable that the woman and her fiancé be present. Thus it sometimes occurs that one or the other of the pair is absent. But such cases are very rare and usually occur [142] if it is very difficult for the individual to be present because, for example, he or she is in the service of a European, or if they themselves do not want to lose a few days or weeks and are sure that their respective fathers get along very well with each other so that everything will go beautifully. Usually, the couple themselves want to be there as much as their parents want them to be, for this is a very important matter.

583× 587 If the woman has not yet publicly given her consent because -- as may happen in the case of remarriage after a divorce -- ikulɨ, ndanga, and walo are all being paid at the same time, she now performs that ceremony. We need not describe it again; it is performed as indicated in Article III, 2. But in this instance the woman hands her father one or two rings, or a ring and a knife.

583× 585 Subsequently, the ndonga conveys the valuables to the woman's parents. He asks the husband: yélɨ bafímba ba walo, "bring the walo valuables." The latter replies: "Here they are; hand them over to my father-in-law." The witness takes a few rings and places them in front of the latter, or rather he touches them and makes a gesture of pushing them toward the woman's parents, and they pull them toward themselves.

As soon as the walo is paid, the bompɨka becomes walɨ or "wife." As has already been said, this word has no connection with walo, or with the root bal, "to marry"; etymologically it is related to analogous terms denoting "wife" and "woman" in other Bantu languages.

## Article V. Valuables for the Mother

583× 431 Directly after he has conveyed the walo valuables to the woman's father, the ndonga asks the husband to pay the valuables for her mother: vélɨ ntaa la nkando [143] yă nyang'ey'ŏna, "bring the goat and the nkando for the child's mother." The following gifts are given:

1) At least one nanny goat and sometimes two or more according to the situation; never a billy-goat.

[301] 2) Two nkando, which are copper spirals worn on the legs. Formerly, two more for the arms were also required, and old women are still sometimes seen wearing them, but they have become much rarer than the spirals worn on the legs. Instead of nkando, the Elɨngɨ, the Wăngatɨ, the Bakɨala, and the Ionda use the term nsongɨ. (1)

1. In Lokonda the term is njekɛ.